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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Committee on Commodities
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Geneva, 12 November 1990
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Provisional agenda, annotations to the provisional agenda and suggestions for the organization of work

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

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II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Item 1: Election of officers

Rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the Main Committees of the Trade and Development Board states that: "At the commencement of the first meeting of each regular session, the Committee shall elect a Chairman, five Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur from among the representatives of its members. These officers shall constitute the Bureau of the Committee. In electing the officers, due account shall be taken of the need to ensure an equitable geographical distribution."

In accordance with rule 19 and the cycle for the rotation of groups (annex I to the rules of procedure), the Chairman of the Committee at its fourteenth session, which is the seventh of a seven-session cycle, is to be elected from among the representatives of African members of Group A and the Rapporteur from among the representatives of members of Group D. Three Vice-Chairmen are to be elected from among the representatives of members of Groups A and C combined, and two from among the representatives of members of Group B.

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The provisional agenda in section I above was approved by the Committee at its thirteenth session (see TD/B/1201 - TD/B/C.1/304, paras. 166-167 and annex II). Suggestions for the organization of work are set out in section III below.

Item 3: Review of the commodity situation and outlook

With a view to assisting the Committee in undertaking this review, the secretariat has prepared a report entitled "Commodity situation and outlook, 1990" (TD/B/C.1/309), which analyses in particular the responsiveness of supply and demand to world price signals and the reasons for the weak response. It also includes a short-term outlook by main commodity groups, describing the expected supply and demand situation.

The Trade and Development Board, by its decision 379 (S-XVI), decided that the problem of commodity export earnings shortfalls of developing countries arising from market instability, as well as the question of compensatory financing of export earnings shortfalls, should be kept under review as part of the ongoing work of the Committee on Commodities. The Board also decided that the first review of this subject by the Committee should take place prior to the eighth session of the Conference. Accordingly, in order to assist the Committee in undertaking this review, the report prepared by the secretariat for this item will also contain information on commodity export earnings shortfalls and recent developments in various compensatory financing schemes.

Item 4: Diversification, processing, marketing and distribution, including transportation

Pursuant to paragraph 3.1 of its agreed conclusion 25 (XIII), the Committee is required to take appropriate action on the reports of the Working Party on Diversification, Processing, Marketing and Distribution, including Transportation, taking into account the Committee's mandates on these subjects.

The Working Party held its second session from 18 to 22 September 1989, at which it adopted a set of agreed conclusions on the three items which the Committee on Commodities had agreed it should consider at that session, namely: (a) market access conditions and other factors and conditions pertinent to the development of viable diversification programmes; (b) the identification of sectors offering opportunities for diversification and increased participation of developing countries in processing, marketing and distribution, including transportation, and of the factors that could facilitate diversification of the economies of developing countries heavily dependent on commodity export earnings as well as possible means for dealing with such factors, based on past and present experiences; and (c) technical assistance for the implementation of these programmes, as well as for feasibility studies and infrastructural developments, and technical co-operation projects and programmes, particularly for human resources development. The report of the Working Party on its second session will be before the Committee in document TD/B/C.1/305 - TD/B/C.1/AC/9.

The remaining two items which the Committee had agreed should be considered by the Working Party are: the improvement of information flows to aid investment decisions; and adequate financial resources for diversification. These items will be considered by the Working Party at its third session, which is scheduled to be held from 5 to 9 November 1990, immediately before the fourteenth session of the Committee. The Chairman of the Working Party at its third session will report to the Committee on the outcome of that session.

In paragraphs 8 and 9 of the agreed conclusions adopted at its second session, the Working Party agreed that further research and analysis were required on the impact on diversification of various market access conditions, government policies, structural adjustment programmes and forms and methods of trading for primary and processed commodities; and on experience with diversification across countries. It requested the UNCTAD secretariat to submit to the Committee on Commodities its suggestions for specific studies in these areas. In response to that request the Committee will have before it a note by the UNCTAD secretariat entitled "Suggestions for further research and analysis in the area of diversification, processing, marketing and distribution, including transportation" (TD/B/C.1/310).

Item 5: Review of the work programme of the Committee, with particular reference to the results of intergovernmental consultations held pursuant to the relevant paragraphs of the Final Act of UNCTAD VII

The attention of the Committee is drawn to paragraphs 6 and 7 of the report of the Ad hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the In-Depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic

and Social Fields (TD/B/1154), endorsed by the Board in its resolution 352 (XXXIV) of 20 November 1987. Under these paragraphs, the Committee is required, at each regular session, without prejudice to its mandate, to (a) review the elaboration of its work programme and the implementation of its decisions; (b) consider and decide on the work ahead, including tasks to be introduced or prolonged in the work programme; and (c) ensure that any specific tasks be clearly defined, with a timetable for their accomplishment.

The Committee will have before it a note (TD/B/C.1/311) indicating the work programme of the Committee and the implementation of decisions relating thereto. This note will, inter alia, report on the results of intergovernmental consultations, negotiations and follow-up action on commodities not covered by existing international commodity agreements, pursuant to relevant paragraphs of the Final Act of UNCTAD VII.

Item 6: Provisional agenda for the fifteenth session of the Committee

In light of the fact that the eighth session of the Conference will be held before the fifteenth session of the Committee, the Committee may wish to consider authorizing the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to prepare a draft provisional agenda for the fifteenth session of the Committee, taking account of the outcome of the Conference, on the understanding that the draft would be subject to consultations with the representatives of regional groups within the framework of the consultative machinery established by Trade and Development Board decision 143 (XVI).

Item 7: Other business

Under this item the Committee will have before it the reports of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Iron Ore on its third session, held from 16 to 19 November 1989 (TD/B/1235 - TD/B/C.1/306 - TD/B/IPC/IRON ORE/AC.1/16) and, if available in time, the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Iron Ore on its fourth session, scheduled to be held from 22 to 24 October 1990. It will also have before it the report of the Committee on Tungsten on its twenty-first session, held from 4 to 8 December 1989 (TD/B/C.1/307 - TD/B/C.1/TUNGSTEN/82).

Item 8: Adoption of the report of the Committee to the Trade and Development Board

The report of the Committee will be considered by the Board at the second part of its thirty-seventh session, scheduled to be held from 11 to 22 March 1991.

The attention of the Committee is drawn to paragraph 31 of the report of the Ad hoc Intergovernmental Working Group referred to above (TD/B/1154), in which it is stated that reports of meetings should be kept within the limit of 32 pages.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

In accordance with paragraph 15 of the report of the Ad hoc Intergovernmental Working Group referred to above, the Committee will have available seven working days, from 12 to 20 November 1990. However, the afternoon of Monday, 19 November, and the whole of Tuesday, 20 November, would need to be set aside for preparation of the draft report and its adoption.

Throughout the session, interpretation facilities will be available for up to two simultaneous meetings in the mornings and afternoons. In accordance with paragraph 24 of the report of the Ad hoc Intergovernmental Working Group, no facilities will be available after 6 p.m., except on the last day of the session, when facilities could be made available until 9 p.m. During the session, limited facilities will be available for regional group meetings. In accordance with paragraph 20 of the above-mentioned report, in the week preceding the Committee session informal pre-session consultations should be held between representatives of interested member States and regional co-ordinators on organizational matters and, when appropriate, on substantive issues; this period could also be used by groups for internal substantive preparations. Facilities will be provided for these consultations and meetings on an "as available" basis.

It is suggested that the first meeting, on 12 November 1990, should be devoted to procedural matters (items 1 and 2) and an opening statement by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD or his representative, and that the last meeting, on 20 November 1990, should be devoted to items 6, 7 and 8. The remaining meetings of the Committee, i.e. from the afternoon of 12 November to the morning of 19 November, would be devoted to the substantive items of the agenda, namely items 3, 4 and 5.